

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 GABORO 01380 01 OF 02 160540Z  
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15  
ICA-11 IO-13 AID-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01 HA-05 ACDA-12  
EB-08 COME-00 /120 W  
-----109674 160551Z /13

P R 150645Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2210  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN  
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM  
AMEMBASSY LAGOS  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA  
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO  
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GABORONE 1380

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PDEV RH WA BC  
SUBJ: BRINGING BOTSWANA TO BEAR ON SOUTHERN AFRICAN PROBLEMS

REF: (A) GABORONE 1245, (B) GABORONE 1326

1. SUMMARY: THIS MESSAGE CALLS ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT  
BOTSWANA PERCEIVES RECENT POLITICAL, MILITARY AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENTS IN THE REGION AS DETERIORATION OF ITS SITUATION,  
FORCING IT TO ABANDON ITS TRADITIONAL LOW-PROFILE ATTITUDE  
IN DEALING WITH SOUTHERN AFRICAN PROBLEMS. BY MAKING THE  
BEST OF THIS NEW MOOD IN BOTSWANA, WE BELIEVE THAT THE WEST-  
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PAGE 02 GABORO 01380 01 OF 02 160540Z

ERN POWERS COULD ENHANCE CHANCES FOR SUCCESS IN FINDING PEACE-  
FUL SETTLEMENTS IN BOTH NAMIBIA AND ZIMBABWE. END SUMMARY.

2. TO DATE, BOTSWANA HAS BEEN COMPARATIVELY IGNORED BY  
CONTACT GROUPS, ANGLO-AMERICAN MISSIONS, ETC. BECAUSE OF  
SEVERAL DISCOURAGING FACTORS:

A. BOTSWANA'S RELUCTANCE TO MAINTAIN PUBLICLY ITS REASONABLE VIEWS OR AGGRESSIVELY ASSERT THEM WITHIN THE COUNCILS OF THE FRONTLINE STATES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. GIVEN ITS EXPOSED LOCATION AND LONG TRADITION OF QUIET DIPLOMACY, BOTSWANA HAS (UNDERSTANDABLY) NOT BEEN IN THE FOREFRONT ON POLITICAL ISSUES;

B. FEELING IN GOB THAT BOTSWANA'S RATIONAL, COMMONSENSICAL AND PRAGMATIC VIEWS, OFTEN CONDITIONED BY ITS PROXIMITY TO AND ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE UPON SOUTH AFRICA AND RHODESIA, WOULD CARRY LITTLE WEIGHT WITH THE MORE MILITANT LEADERS OF THE NATIONALIST GROUPS AND THE FRONTLINE STATES;

C. WITHOUT EVEN AN ARMY TO OPPOSE RHODESIAN INCURSIONS INTO ITS OWN TERRITORY, BOTSWANA WAS SEEN AS A WEAK COUNTRY WHICH COULD EXERCISE LITTLE INFLUENCE WITH FL COLLEAGUES, MOST OF WHOM HAVE EXPERIENCE WITH AND CONFIDENCE IN THE POWER OF WARS OF LIBERATION, E.G. ARE ACTIVELY RESISTING ARMED RHODESIAN OR SOUTH AFRICAN PENETRATIONS WHILE QUIETLY PLANNING AND PROMOTING ORGANIZED SUBVERSION AGAINST THEM. IN THIS CONTEXT, THE TRADITIONAL PASSIVITY OF THE PEOPLE OF BOTSWANA WAS TAKEN AS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS.

3. THE REALITIES OF THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA ARE CLEARLY FORCING BOTSWANA TO CHANGE AND TO EMBARK ON A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN SEEKING SOLUTIONS. A MOOD OF EXASPERATION AND CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 GABORO 01380 01 OF 02 160540Z

FRUSTRATION IS SWEEPING BOTSWANA, A FEELING THAT THE STATUS QUO IS TOO COSTLY, TOO THREATENING; A FEELING THAT IF GUERRILLA ACTIONS AND POLITICAL UNCERTAINTIES ON ITS BORDERS ARE NOT ENDED THE COUNTRY WILL BE DRAWN INEXORABLY INTO SOUTHERN AFRICAN TURMOIL WHICH COULD ENDANGER BOTH ITS DEVELOPMENT AND SOVEREIGNTY. THIS NEW MOOD COMES IN THE WAKE OF RECENT AND THREATENING DEVELOPMENTS INCLUDING: (A) THE FEBRUARY 27 SLAYING OF FIFTEEN BOTSWANA DEFENSE FORCE SOLDIERS AND TWO CIVILIANS BY THE RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES; (B) THE RAPID INCREASE IN THE REFUGEE INFLUX, DOUBLED IN FOUR MONTHS TO MORE THAN 8,500 WHICH BRING NEW POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PRESSURES; (C) THE DISCONTINUATION OF THE REGULAR CHARTER FLIGHTS THAT FORMERLY TOOK REFUGEES TO ZAMBIA; (D) THE COST, IN TERMS OF FUNDS DIVERTED FROM DEVELOPMENT, OF BUILDING THE BDF UP TO ITS 2,000-MAN GOAL; (E) THE SIMULTANEOUS BATTLE AGAINST A DISASTROUS HOOF AND MOUTH EPIDEMIC WHICH IS CRIPPLING THE NATION'S MOST IMPORTANT EXPORT INDUSTRY; (F) THE FORMATION OF THE "INTERNAL SETTLEMENT" IN SALISBURY AND THE INTRANSIGENCE OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT; AND (G) SWAPO'S CAVILLING AT THE CONTACT GROUP PROPOSALS ON NAMIBIA -- A STEP SEEN BY THE GOB AS NEEDLESSLY PROLONGING A CONFLICT WHICH ADVERSELY AFFECTS BOTSWANA.

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PAGE 01 GABORO 01380 02 OF 02 150820Z  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GABORONE 1380

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

4. DESPITE THE RECENT SOUTH AFRICAN RAID INTO ANGOLA, THE  
HEIGHTENED GOB DETERMINATION TO ATTACK SOUTHERN AFRICAN PROBLEMS  
BEFORE THEY SPILL OVER HAS ALREADY LED PRESIDENT KHAMA TO  
ADOPT POSITIONS INCREASINGLY SUPPORTIVE OF THE WEST AND QUITE  
DISTINCT FROM AFRICAN NATIONALIST LEADER AND FRONTLINE  
COLLEAGUES. EVIDENCE OF THIS CHANGE CAN BE SEEN (A) IN KHAMA'S  
PUBLIC CRITICISM, IN BITING TERMS, OF SWAPO'S REJECTION OF THE  
CG PROPOSAL FOR NAMIBIA. AS POINTED OUT REF A, KHAMA'S  
STATEMENT WAS APPARENTLY THE FIRST UNQUALIFIED SUPPORT FOR THE  
PROPOSALS FROM AN AFRICAN OR NON-ALIGNED COUNTRY; AND (B)  
THE PRESIDENT'S FORCEFUL PUBLIC REBUKE OF BOTH INTERNAL AND  
EXTERNAL RHODESIEN NATIONALISTS AND HIS UNQUALIFIED CALL ON  
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PAGE 02 GABORO 01380 02 OF 02 150820Z

THEM TO ATTEND THE ALL-PARTIES CONFERENCE (REF B). FURTHER EXAMPLES OF KHAMA'S DESIRE FOR CLOSER ASSOCIATION WITH THE WEST ARE EVIDENT IN GOB EMPHASIS ON MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER, ITS APPEALS TO US FOR SECURITY ASSISTANCE AND REFUGEE AID. (WE MIGHT ALSO RECALL THAT THE GOB SOLICITED ANGLO-AMERICAN TALKING POINTS TO BE USED BY KHAMA DURING MUZOREWA'S RECENT VISIT TO GABORONE.) THESE AND OTHER FIRM INDICATIONS CAN BE READ AS GOB DESIRE AND WILLINGNESS TO ASSOCIATE ITSELF WITH WESTERN POSITIONS ON ZIMBABWE, NAMIBIA AND SOUTH AFRICA ITSELF.

5. ALONG WITH GOB WILLINGNESS TO BECOME INVOLVED, WE BELIEVE THAT GOB VIEWS WILL HAVE AN IMPACT GREATER THAN EVER BEFORE ON THE PARTIES THEMSELVES. FIRST, BOTSWANA IS BUILDING A DEFENSE FORCE THAT, STARTING FROM SCRATCH, CAN ONLY BECOME INCREASINGLY EFFECTIVE; SECOND, AS A RESULT OF CASUALTIES LOST TO THE RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES AND THE INCREASING SHOULDERING OF THE REFUGEE BURDEN, BOTSWANA IS ACQUIRING STATUS IN THE RANKS OF THE FRONTLINE STATES; THIRD, ITS EVEN-HANDEDNESS IN THE PAST GIVES IT STANDING WITH ALL PARTIES TO CONFLICT IN ZIMBABWE AND NAMIBIA. IF BOTSWANA'S INCREASING SACRIFICES GIVE GOB VIEWS MORE WEIGHT, AND WE BELIEVE THEY DO, THEY ALSO GIVE THE GOB MORE SELF-CONFIDENCE IN ASSERTING ITS VIEWS IN THE COUNCILS OF THE OAU, FLS AND THE UN.

6. AT THE SAME TIME, BOTSWANA HAS THE ADVANTAGE OF A RELATIVELY SECURE ECONOMIC POSITION (ATTRIBUTABLE IN PART TO DISCOVERY OF LARGE DIAMOND DEPOSITS AND RELIABLE SOURCES OF DONOR AID ASSISTANCE) AND ITS IMMEDIATE GEOGRAPHICAL PROXIMITY TO BOTH ZIMBABWE AND NAMIBIA. THESE ADVANTAGES SHOULD GAIN MORE RESPECT FOR BOTSWANA'S VIEWS (NOW THAT SHE IS WILLING TO EXPRESS THEM), POSSIBLY MORE AT TIMES THAN THOSE OF OTHER FL STATES WHICH ARE EITHER ECONOMIC BASKET CASES OR GEO-CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 GABORO 01380 02 OF 02 150820Z

GRAPHICALLY REMOTE FROM THE AREAS OF CONFLICT. ANOTHER UNIQUE ADVANTAGE WHICH BOTSWANA HAS IS THAT, UNLIKE OTHER PARTICIPANTS, IT MAINTAINS PASSABLE, IF NOT CORDIAL, RELATIONS WITH ALL PARTIES TO SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONFLICTS, EVEN SOUTH AFRICA; E.G., BOTH MUZOREWA AND NKOMO HAVE VISITED PRESIDENT KHAMA IN GABORONE WITHIN THE PAST FOUR WEEKS AND GOB-SAG RELATIONS HAVE APPARENTLY WITHSTOOD A BORDER SHOOTING INCIDENT. FINALLY, BOTSWANA, WITH ITS DEMOCRATIC AND NON-RACIAL SOCIETY, IS IDEOLOGICALLY COMPATIBLE WITH THE DEMOCRATIC SPIRIT OF THE WESTERN PROPOSALS ON BOTH ZIMBABWE AND NAMIBIA.

7. CONCLUSION: THE CONCLUSION THAT EMERGES IS THAT U.S. AND OTHER COUNTRIES SEEKING SOLUTIONS TO THESE PROBLEMS SHOULD REVIEW AND RECONSIDER WHETHER THE POTENTIAL LEVERAGE OF THIS FRONTLINE STATE IS BEING USED OPTIMALLY IN FINDING PEACEFUL

SETTLEMENTS IN BOTH NAMIBIA AND ZIMBABWE.

8. ALTHOUGH NO ONE CAN SAY NOW TO WHAT DEGREE BOTSWANA COULD BE USED MORE EFFECTIVELY BY CONTACT GROUP AND ANGLO-AMERICAN NEGOTIATORS, WE BELIEVE BOTSWANA'S WILLINGNESS TO GET INVOLVED OUGHT TO BE GRADUALLY TESTED AND THE RESULT BROUGHT TO BEAR ON SOLVING SOUTHERN AFRICAN PROBLEMS. ACCORDINGLY, EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT: (A) THE LOW-GRAHAM TEAM VISIT HERE AND TAKE THE GOB INTO FULL CONFIDENCE; (B) KHAMA BE ENLISTED IN DEALING WITH OBSTACLES TO AAP AND CG PROPOSALS WHETHER WITHIN THE NATIONALIST GROUPS, THE FRONTLINE STATES OR THE OAU; AND (C) THAT GABORONE BE VISITED BY A RANKING U.S. OFFICIAL IN CONNECTION

WITH FORTHCOMING NEOTIATIONS WITH ALL PARTIES. BECWUSE OF DEARTH OF TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES, IT IS A SITE WHERE PARTIES CAN MEET QUIETLY WITHOUT THE GLARE OF PUBLICITY.

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## Message Attributes

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